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S E R M O N

Preached in the

PARISH-CHURCH of EPPING,

IN THE

COUNTY of ESSEX,

In the Year M.DCC.LXII.

AT THE

F U N E R A L

OF

Mrs. MARY LLOYD, K

WIDOW of the Revd. Mr. JOHN LLOYD,

Late VICAR of that PARISH.

S. E. R. M. O. N.

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Printed at the
PARISH CHURCH OF EPPING,
COUNTY OF ESSEX,
in the year of our Lord 1841,
and in the year of our
Sovereign's Majesty Queen Victoria,
the first year of her Majesty's
reign.

PROV. xxxi. 30, 31.

*Favour is deceitful, and Beauty
is vain: But a Woman that
feareth the Lord, she shall be
praised.*

*Give her of the Fruit of her
Hands, and let her own Works
praise her in the Gates.*

THE Custom of speaking
in praise of departed Re-
lations and Friends at their Fu-
nerals is so ancient, and has been
so universal, that there is scarce
any Age or Country, in which

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some traces of it may not be found. It is well known to the Learned, that the wisest and most polish'd Nations among the Heathens observed this Practice ; and the Sacred History will inform us, that the chosen People of God did not neglect to pay this tribute of respect to those, whom they esteem'd either for their public, or their private Virtues. The celebrated Lamentation made by David over Saul, and over Jonathan his son, which is recorded in the first Chapter of the second Book of Samuel, is an eminent Instance of this Truth ; and the same pious David is represented at the grave of Abner, one of his
 3 chief

chief Captains, lifting up his voice, weeping and uttering some passionate expressions of grief over the body of his deceased servant. The good King Josiah likewise, we are told, was mourned by all Judah and Jerusalem; but it is particularly remark'd by the sacred Historian, that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; from which it is reasonable to conclude, that this pious Prophet compos'd upon this occasion a funeral Oration, in which he rehears'd the praises of that worthy Prince, and exhorted the People to revere his memory. There is still another passage in this last-mention'd Prophet, which naturally leads us to think, that

not only such eminent Persons as have been before spoken of, but others of a lower degree likewise receiv'd this last offering of respect and gratitude from their surviving Relations and Friends: For when Jeremiah foretells the miserable fate that should attend the wicked Jehoiakim, son of the excellent Josiah, he adds this among other circumstances of his ignominious death: *They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah! my Brother! or Ah Sister! They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah Lord! or Ah his Glory!* By which the Prophet may be understood to mean, that he should be so far from

from being honour'd with the pompous Obsequies, due to his Birth and Station, that he should not even be favour'd with the common and decent Ceremony of his Kinsfolk and Acquaintance meeting at his Grave, and expressing their regard for him, and the sense of their own Loss, by such short but significant dictates of sorrow as were most usual at the Funerals of inferior Persons.

We may go on to remark, that the Observation of this Custom is by no means disallow'd by the Religion of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ; for, tho' we cannot perhaps find in the Gospels any express Instance of this

Usage,

Usage, yet when we consider how greatly the Author of our Religion interested himself in the Deaths of others at some particular times, and when we further reflect upon his Behaviour at those times, we may reasonably conclude, that he approved of every proper mark of regard, that might be shew'd to departed Friends. His compassionate care of the distress'd Widow of Nain, who follow'd the bier of her dead son; and those Tears of his, which spoke, over Lazarus's grave, what Language could not have express'd, are Testimonies sufficient to warrant the tenderest indications of

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our grief on such melancholy Occasions.

From the earliest Ages this Custom has pass'd down to our own, and, at some certain Periods, has been much observ'd by the Inhabitants of this Nation: At present, indeed, it is in a great measure disused among us; and perhaps some good Reasons may be assign'd for this disuse: The Superstition of that Church, from whose Corruptions we have been reformed, may have perverted it to the purposes of their Idolatry; and some, perhaps, among ourselves, may have been tempted by a prospect of gain, or by too great a partiality to the Persons whom they

they have commended, to be so
lavish of undeserved praise, as to
utter things unsuitable to such
solemn Times, and such sacred
Places. But the Abuse of this
Custom ought by no means wholly
to dissuade us from the Use of it.
For since it is not only innocent,
but commendable in itself ; since
it has been practis'd by the wisest
Nations, is authoriz'd by one Part
of Holy Scripture, and not dis-
countenanc'd by the other, it may
doubtless be reasonably and use-
fully observed at every proper
Opportunity. And the Provi-
dence of God has now, I am per-
suaded, presented to us such an
Opportunity for performing this
last

last Office of duty and Respect.
 An Office which not the Vain-glory
 of the Deceased has directed, (for
 her Modesty, indeed, would scarce
 have permitted it) Not the Ex-
 pectation of any lucrative Advan-
 tage has incited ; nor, I trust,
 the Vanity of the Preacher has
 suggested ; but which he has been
 prompted to by his sincere Affec-
 tion for the departed Friend,
 which, at the same time that
 it urges him to undertake the
 melancholy Employment, may
 perhaps incapacitate him for the
 due performance of it. He will,
 however, attempt to engage your
 attention, whilst he endeavours
 to represent to you what those

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Quali-

Qualifications are, which will most recommend any Persons to our Esteem, when living, and best intitle them to our Commendations, when dead; and then he will beg Leave to shew, that these Qualifications were so eminently united in the Character of that Person, whose Funeral we now attend, as fully to justify that Encomium, which will be given to it, whilst it deserves a better.

My Text itself will assist us in pointing out those Virtues, which ought to engage our greatest Esteem for any Persons, especially those of the female Sex. In the Chapter, of which the Text is the conclusion, an affectionate

Mother

Mother is introduc'd addressing in the tenderest Manner her Son, the Son of her Womb, the Son of her Vows ; exhorting him to pursue such a course of life, as might make him happy in himself, and a Blessing to others : Among several Particulars she directs him in the choice of a Wife, advising him to place his affections upon such a Woman only, as might approach nearest to that excellent Pattern, which is so fully drawn in this Chapter, that it takes up no less than two and twenty Verses of it ; in each of which some peculiar Circumstance is mention'd contributing to form the Character intended to

be represented; and the Whole exhibits to us such an one, as is always to be wish'd, though rarely to be found. A virtuous Disposition, Integrity of Manners, and Faithfulness in Conduct are the Qualifications first describ'd, because these are necessary to lay the foundation of all other Perfections, and are most essential to the happiness of the married state: *For* (as the Author of my Text expresses it) *the Heart of her Husband will safely trust in such a Wife; she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her Life.* Industry, Diligence, Activity in Business, and a sufficient skill in Household Affairs are next

represented : For these are requisite to procure or preserve that Competency which the exigencies of a Family constantly demand : Therefore such a Woman (according to the language of the same Author) *seeketh Wool and Flax, and worketh willingly with her Hands : She considereth a Field, and buyeth it ; and with the fruit of her Hands she planteth a Vineyard.* To secure such well-gotten wealth, Frugality and Oeconomy are the next mention'd Qualifications, absolutely necessary to a small Fortune, and useful to the greatest ; for which Reason the good Wife is in another verse describ'd *rising also while it is yet Night,*

Night, giving Meat to her Household, and a Portion to her Maidens. By such careful Management she is enabl'd at once to relieve the distresses of others, and to maintain her own Family in a decent splendor: She stretcheth out her Hand to the Poor—and—at the same Time—all her Household are clothed with Scarlet. But, in the midst of all this worldly Care and attention to business, she suffereth not herself to forget that God, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh; and therefore she maketh Piety and Religion the principal concern of her Life; the constant Subject of her own thoughts, and of her discourse
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to others. *She openeth her Mouth with Wisdom, and in her Tongue is the Law of Kindness.* So deserving a Wife and so prudent a Mother must doubtless engage in the strongest manner the Affections of her Husband and her Children; so that very justly is this amiable Character closed by representing the latter *rising up and blessing her*, and the former praising her with this remarkable Eulogy, *Many Daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.* The whole Chapter then concludes with the words of the Text: Intimating, that neither the most exact Grace of Body, nor the most perfect Beauty, are so worthy of Esteem,

Esteem, as a lovely Mind enrich'd with the Virtues that spring from Goodness of Temper, Benevolence of Heart, and unaffected Piety; and that a Woman endow'd with these Excellencies must command Respect and Veneration from all, who, seeing the good Fruits of such a Disposition, will not fail to admire her Works, and commend her for them: *Favour is deceitful, and Beauty is vain; But a Woman, that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the Fruit of her Hands, and let her own Works praise her in the Gates.*

It may be doubtful, perhaps, whether the accomplish'd Character

ter exhibited in this Chapter be not drawn, like some others in antient Authors, rather as a Pattern, according to which all ought to form themselves, than as the Description of any real particular Person. But, tho' this should be admitted, yet I persuade myself, that there was a Person, who approach'd as near to the Perfections therein describ'd, as human Nature, the differences of Ages, Countries, and Stations will allow of. That excellent Woman, whose Remains now lie before us, discover'd, thro' the whole course of her life, such a number of rare Virtues, as justly render'd her a Blessing to those, with whom she

blessing to

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was

was more intimately connected ;
and an Example most worthy of
Imitation to all, who were so hap-
py as to be within it's Influence.

This Truth will more fully ap-
pear by taking a view of her
Character in the several Scenes, thro'
which she pass'd, and by pointing
out in each the distinguishing Ex-
cellencies of it.

From Parents, who were singu-
larly good themselves, she deriv'd
by Nature, and acquir'd by Edu-
cation the Principles of those Vir-
tues, which so eminently shone
forth in the future progress of her
life. That ingenuous Modesty,
which adorn'd her Virgin-State ;
that generous Oeconomy, which
render'd

render'd her a prudent and an amiable Wife ; that decent Chearfulness, which inspir'd all her Conversation, and that Integrity of Heart, which sanctify'd all her Actions : But, above all, that Piety of Sentiment and religious Deportment, which enabl'd her *to grow in favour with God, as well as Man.*

At an early Period of her Age she experienc'd some Misfortunes, that gave her an Opportunity to exert those Virtues, which Times of Adversity only can call forth and display : And here, indeed, her Character rose to an high degree of Perfection. Such Meekness of Temper in the midst

of Sufferings, and so much Patience in enduring them; such Fortitude in struggling with Calamities join'd to so much Resignation under them, and so little Repining at the Hand that inflicted them, have been shewn by few, but *are worthy to be an Ensamble* to all.—At length the Storms of Adversity were blown over; and, tho' they left her still press'd with the weight of some Difficulties, yet that Evenness of Temper, which was so peculiar to her, soon restor'd her to such Tranquillity, as is the natural effect of a Consciousness of having done well, and suffer'd for it. In this calm Repose she pass'd several Years; du-
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ring which time she had frequent opportunities of contributing to the happiness of her numerous Friends by the pleasure and the profit of her Company; by her assistance to them in Time of distress, and by the benefit of an enlivening Conversation, which many have alternately enjoy'd, and will now deplore the loss of it.

—So fitted as she was to become an agreeable Companion, she could not be permitted to pass the remainder of her days in a widow'd State; for there was a Person, who knew the value of her Society, and was so happy, as to partake more intimately of it in Marriage. This Person was so

well

well known in this Place, and distinguish'd himself so eminently in it, that they, who hear me, will easily form to themselves that Character of him, which Modesty forbids me to represent. But it may be justly said, that he never discover'd more perfectly his good Sense, Soundness of Judgment, and Love of Virtue, than in the Choice which he made of this excellent Woman. For her Conduct in this Scene of Life fully answer'd his utmost expectations, and so won upon the Hearts even of those, who were most likely to have been displeas'd, that it enabl'd her to soften those terrors, which the Name of a Step-Mother

Mother generally excites, and to make that Relation not only tolerable, but desirable; and, altho' the Providence of God had not thought fit to bless her with any Offspring, yet it now gave her an opportunity of shewing, how well she could sustain the part of a tender Parent; for the Children of her Husband, who scarce ever knew a Mother of their own, after she had enter'd into their Father's Family, never wanted one. Whilst she continued in this Situation, she not only preserv'd, but heighten'd her former Character; alleviating the many Infirmities of him to whom she was united, with the most assiduous

duous Tendernefs; regulating his Family with a prudent yet generous Management; and conciliating to herself the regard of all his Friends by the most engaging behaviour. At length the Scene once more chang'd upon her by the loss of this Companion of her life: And her Sensibility of this Misfortune might have reduc'd her to a melancholy condition, if it had not been impossible, that a Person so much esteem'd by so many Friends should ever have been left disconsolate. However, an advanc'd Age, and the Decays naturally attending it, would not suffer her long to survive this last Loss: so that she

she began to approach to the End of the number of those Days, which she had fill'd up with so much Honour ; and a violent Disorder, which seiz'd her sooner, continued longer, and exercis'd her with more acute pains, than they, who lov'd her, could have wish'd, at length clos'd a Life, that had been spent with the greatest Reputation to herself, the most entire Satisfaction of her Friends, and (I firmly trust) the Approbation of her God.

It remains only that we revere her Virtues, and endeavour to copy after her in the exercise of them ; for they will shew the greatest Regard to this Person's

E Memory,